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Barack Obama, president of the USA, speaking at the United States Military Academy at West Point

AMERICAN PRESIDENT DECIDES ON AFGHANISTAN

On 1st December Barack Obama, the president of the USA, made a speech at West Point – a military academy where army officers complete their training. In his speech, which was shown on live television, President Obama said he had decided to send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan.

American troops have been fighting a war against the Taliban in Afghanistan since 2001. The Taliban seized control of the country in 1996 and governed it under very strict Islamic rules. Taliban leaders allowed a militant group called al-Qaeda to set up training bases in the country. This group organised attacks on New York City and Washington DC, in the USA, on 11th September 2001.

George W Bush, the American president at the time, demanded the Taliban hand over the al-Qaeda leaders. When it refused he ordered an invasion of

Afghanistan. The Taliban and al-Qaeda quickly withdrew to mountainous areas near the border with Pakistan.

American troops occupied larger towns and cities. Soon afterwards military forces from some NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member countries began to arrive in Afghanistan to help the USA. Other countries such as Australia and New Zealand also sent troops. Now people from 42 different countries are working in Afghanistan. Not all are soldiers. Some countries have sent medical and humanitarian teams.

An election was arranged in 2003 and Hamid Karzai became Afghanistan's president. In the same year, the USA invaded Iraq. American troops and military supplies that might otherwise have been sent to Afghanistan were needed in Iraq.

Yet the Taliban had not been defeated. It continued to attack American and

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NATO troops from its mountain bases in the south of the country. The Taliban has also been able to carry out bombings and shootings in Kabul, the capital city, and larger towns throughout the country. The senior al-Qaeda leaders have never been captured.

President Obama took over from President Bush at the beginning of 2009. Many Americans voted for Mr Obama because they believed he would quickly bring an end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



In September General McChrystal, the leader of the American and NATO forces in Afghanistan, said he needed another 40,000 troops. This would bring the number of American and NATO troops in the country to around 140,000. The General said unless the USA sends extra troops, there is a chance the American and NATO forces will not be successful.

President Obama has taken three months to decide what to do. During this time he has asked for advice from many senior government officials and military leaders. Some expected him to refuse the General's request.

Many who voted for Mr Obama were disappointed at his decision. They believe escalating the war is the wrong thing to do. They also worry about the cost. The government of the USA calculates it is spending US\$3.6

billion (£2.17 billion) a month on the war in Afghanistan.

The day before President Obama's speech Gordon Brown, the prime minister of the UK, said 500 more British troops will be sent. This will bring the total number of British troops in Afghanistan to 10,000 – the second-highest number after the USA.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen is the NATO Secretary-General. After President Obama's speech he said other NATO member countries will provide an additional 5,000 troops.

President Obama said the Taliban and al-Qaeda must be defeated so the militant group is not free to organise new attacks on the USA and European countries. He said Pakistan must also make greater efforts to defeat the militant Taliban and al-Qaeda groups on its side of the border.

President Obama also declared American troops will start to withdraw from Afghanistan in 2011. The size of the Afghan army and police force will be increased and they will be given more training. The Afghan army and police will take over from the American and NATO troops as they leave the country. Afghan officials will be asked to increase their efforts to persuade Taliban fighters to change sides.

Some people think 2011 is too early to begin withdrawing troops. They say setting a date might even encourage the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Yet others say this is President Obama's way of telling Afghan and Pakistani leaders that American and NATO forces will not stay in Afghanistan forever.

General McChrystal said he was pleased with President Obama's decision. Most think the additional troops will be sent to Helmand and Kandahar provinces in the south of

the country. This is where the fighting has been fiercest.

Experts say the extra troops should make it easier to protect civilians in the larger towns. Here new schools, hospitals and other facilities are being set up. Local people are also being encouraged to start businesses.

Many Americans described Afghanistan as 'Bush's war'. Now the president's decision has led some to call it 'Obama's war'. Some political experts say President Obama's chance of being re-elected president in 2012 will now depend on whether his decision leads to winning the war in Afghanistan. ■

ANCIENT DISEASE

Scientists from Egypt and the USA have completed some studies of Egyptian mummies. Their work seems to show Ancient Egyptians suffered from a type of heart disease that affects people today.

Arteries are vessels that carry blood away from the heart to other parts of the body. Sometimes the wall of an artery can get thicker. This is called atherosclerosis or 'hardening' of the arteries. It is caused by fatty substances, such as cholesterol, building up on the inner wall of the artery. In some cases thickening of the arteries can lead to a heart attack.

Some experts believe hardening of the arteries is a modern illness. They think it is caused by smoking, a lack of exercise, and many of the foods we eat. They argue that eating too many 'fatty foods' can lead to thickening of the artery walls. Other experts think atherosclerosis is linked to diet, but say the disease may also be genetic. This means some

people's genes make them more likely to suffer from the disease.

The scientists carried out tests on 22 mummies. They all came from the Museum of Antiquities in Cairo, the capital of Egypt.



Mummy and medical scanner

The mummies were scanned to find which ones had arteries in a good enough condition to be studied. Arteries could still be identified in 16 of the 22 mummies.

The scientists found signs of hardened arteries in nine of the 16 mummies. Some had as many as six different arteries that showed signs of the disease.

The scientists also worked out the approximate age of the people when they died. Seven of the eight mummies thought to be over 45 had signs of the disease. Yet only two of the mummies that died at an earlier age looked as if they had suffered from hardening of the arteries. The disease seemed to affect men and women equally.

The most ancient mummy studied was of a woman who worked for a pharaoh's wife. She lived around 3,500 years ago. The woman died when she was about 35 years old. She too seems to have had a thickening of the arteries.

The scientists say the mummies are all the remains of quite wealthy people. Their diet would have included meat. But they would not have smoked or eaten too many fatty foods, and probably exercise more than

many people do today. The scientists said their results show there may be several other reasons why people suffer from atherosclerosis. ■

NEW EU PRESIDENT AND HIGH REPRESENTATIVE

On the evening of 19th November the leaders of the 27 member countries of the European Union (EU) met in Brussels, the capital of Belgium. The main reason for the meeting was to choose two people to take up two new important EU jobs.

The two new jobs are the president of the European Council, and the EU's high representative. Most people thought there would be many disagreements about who would be given the jobs. They expected the meeting to last until the early hours of the morning.



Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton

This did not happen. Within a short time it was announced that Herman Van Rompuy, the prime minister of Belgium, would be president. Catherine Ashton was selected as high representative. Ms Ashton, who is a politician from the UK, is also known by her title of Baroness Ashton of Upholland. Mr Van Rompuy and Baroness Ashton started their new jobs on 1st December. Belgium has had to select a new prime minister.

Before the job of president of the European Council was created, the EU had a 'rotating' presidency. This

meant that leaders of the 27 member countries took it in turns to be president of the EU for six months each. Mr Van Rompuy will be president for the next two and a half years.

The job of high representative is similar to that of a country's foreign minister. So the high representative will make decisions on how the EU deals with non-EU countries.

The job of president of the EU Council is not the same as the president of the EU Commission. José Manuel Barroso, a former prime minister of Portugal, holds this position. The Commission is responsible for running the EU. It has 27 commissioners – one from each EU member country. These include Mr Barroso and the new EU high representative. Mr Barroso has just drawn up a new list of commissioners. This will have to be approved by the European Parliament in January.

Each commissioner manages a different department, such as trade, tax, and communication. One new department is 'climate action'. Mr Barroso has appointed Connie Hedegaard, from Denmark, to this position.

The new jobs of president and high representative were created as part of the Lisbon Treaty. After many years of talks the EU member countries all finally agreed to the Lisbon Treaty in November. The Treaty, which changes many of the rules on how the EU is run, is named after the capital city of Portugal.

Not everyone approves of the EU. Some accuse it of being undemocratic. Many of these people say Mr Van Rompuy's appointment is one example of what is wrong with the EU. They claim the president of the EU should be elected, and not just chosen by EU leaders over an evening dinner. ■

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS IN DUBAI?

On the evening of 25th November the government of Dubai made an announcement that surprised many financial experts. It said Dubai World – a large company in Dubai – was having difficulties paying back some of the money it has borrowed.

Dubai World is a conglomerate, or group of companies. A company called Nakheel is one of Dubai World's companies. Nakheel is a property company that has built many blocks of flats and expensive luxury houses on man-made islands in Dubai.

Money experts estimate Dubai World has borrowed about US\$60 billion (£36 billion) in total. Another of Dubai World's companies is called DP World. This company owns the main port in Dubai and many other ports in European countries.



New buildings under construction in Dubai

The government of Dubai has asked organisations that lent money to Dubai World for a 'debt repayment holiday'. This would give the company a break from paying back its debts. It says it will be unable to start repaying any money until May 2010.

The main problem is thought to be with the Nakheel Company. It is due to pay back a bond – similar to an IOU – of US\$4 billion (£2.4 billion) on 14th December. Some experts believe the company cannot repay this amount. They suspect this

was the reason for the government's announcement.

Dubai is one of seven emirates known as the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Dubai's leader, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, decided to turn the small desert country into a modern city. Companies were set up, including Dubai World, using large amounts of borrowed money. Much of the money was used to build skyscrapers for offices, hotels and flats. It was also used to buy companies, hotels, and leisure facilities – golf courses and amusement parks – in other countries such as the UK and the USA.

Many people moved to Dubai to find work in the growing number of businesses. Some say it's a good meeting place for companies from the 'East' and the 'West' to do business. Several of Dubai's companies – for example, the Emirates airline – are very successful.

Abu Dhabi, another one of the emirates, is very wealthy. It is estimated to have around nine percent of the world's known oil supplies. In the past Abu Dhabi has lent large amounts of money to companies in Dubai. Some people think the announcement about Dubai World was made because Abu Dhabi is unwilling to lend any more money to companies in Dubai.

Many people believe Sheikh Mohammed, the Dubai government and the large companies in Dubai are all connected. They wonder if this might mean Abu Dhabi would also refuse to help the Dubai government if it too were unable to pay its debts. Yet others think this is unlikely.

On 30th November an official said the government was not connected to Dubai World. He also said

Dubai World would have to make its own arrangements to pay its debts.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahayan is the president of the UAE. On 1st November he said there were no problems with the economy of the UAE. He also praised Sheikh Mohammed and how he and his government were running Dubai. Many people believe his statement means the other Emirates will support the government of Dubai if it has money problems in the future. ■

TRAIN ATTACK IN RUSSIA

Several carriages of a high-speed train came off the railway tracks on 27th November in Russia. Officials claimed a bomb exploded close to the track and caused the accident.

The train, called the Nevsky Express, was travelling between Moscow and St Petersburg. Moscow is the capital of Russia and St Petersburg is the country's second largest city. The Nevsky Express is

NEWSCAST

EMBARRASSED ROBBER — Police in Portugal arrested a man who was trying to break into a supermarket. They caught him very easily. The robber had broken a small window, but became stuck when he climbed through it. In the morning the owner of the supermarket arrived for work. He found the man half-in and half-out of the window. His feet were off the ground and, while he tried to free himself, his trousers had fallen down. His arms were on the other side of the window so he could not pull his trousers up. Rescue workers had to be called to free him.

a popular way of travelling between the two. Government officials, businesspeople and tourists frequently use the train.

The explosion happened about halfway between the cities. The bomb went off after the train went over it. The last three passenger carriages were derailed. Two carriages ended up on their sides. The carriages at the front of the train were unaffected. The train was travelling at 208 kilometres (130 miles) per hour when the bomb exploded.

People living in a nearby village were the first to arrive to help. As the accident happened in a remote area, it was two hours before all the rescue workers arrived. It is believed that 30 people had been killed and around 100 injured. A temporary hospital was set up to treat the injured.

At first it was thought the accident was caused by an electrical problem but later the police found a small bomb crater under the rails. Officials then confirmed it had been a terrorist attack. The next day, while rescue workers were still at the crash site, another small bomb exploded. This did not harm anyone.

Attacks such as this one have happened before in Russia. Two years ago a bomb derailed a train on the same railway line. Nobody was killed, but 30 passengers were injured.

So far no terrorist group has claimed it carried out the attack. But officials suspect members of a militant group from Chechnya were responsible. This is because they are known to have attacked trains and trams in Russia in the past.

Chechnya is a small southern Russian republic next to the border with Georgia. Most people who live there are Muslims. Many claim that they have been treated very badly

by Russian military forces. The militant group wants Chechnya to become an independent country.



Wrecked carriages of the Nevsky Express

Dmitry Medvedev, the president of Russia, said the train attack will be investigated. He insists the people who carried it out will be caught and punished. ■

THANKSGIVING

On 26th November, Americans celebrated the festival of Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving in the USA takes place on the last Thursday of November. Other countries have Thanksgiving festivals too, such as Canada, where Thanksgiving is celebrated in October. Traditionally, at this time of year, crops are harvested in the Northern hemisphere.

Thanksgiving in the USA began as a religious festival. The Pilgrims, who were Christians, were some of the first people from Europe to travel to America in the early 1600s. Then Europeans called America the 'New World'. Within a few years European settlers in the New World had grown crops and had a good harvest. They held a 'Thanksgiving' feast and special church services to give thanks to God for providing for them.

Historians say this first Thanksgiving feast was held jointly with Native American people. They helped the European settlers when

they arrived, showing them how to hunt and trap animals for food. According to many historians, the settlers would not have survived without this help.

Today Thanksgiving is not just a religious festival. For many people it is a day to feel thankful for being fortunate – for example, for having good health and family and friends. People use it as a day to remember to be grateful for the things they have. One of the most common Thanksgiving celebrations is for people to get together with their family and friends for a meal. Many religious and community groups serve Thanksgiving meals to people who don't have families with whom they can celebrate.

Traditionally the Thanksgiving dinner is a roasted turkey, with corn and other vegetables grown in the autumn season. Many people also eat pumpkin pie. Vegetables such as sweet potatoes and pumpkins are plants native to the Americas. They were new to the Europeans who arrived in the 1600s.



Thanksgiving dinner

One recent tradition is for the president of the USA to 'save' a turkey from being roasted for Thanksgiving dinner. This year, President Barack Obama 'pardoned' a turkey named Courage. The pardon was given at a special ceremony at the White House, where the president lives, in Washington DC, the capital of the USA. Courage will now go to

live in Disneyland, a holiday theme park in the state of California.

A big parade is held in New York City to celebrate Thanksgiving. Performers dance and sing on many large colourful **floats** that drive slowly through the streets. Some floats tow huge balloons in the air above them. Thousands of Americans travel to New York City to see the parade. Many more watch it on television. ■

OIL TANKER CAPTURED

On 30th November a group of pirates from Somalia captured a large oil tanker. The ship was sailing from Saudi Arabia to the USA. The pirates forced the ship's crew to sail towards the coast of Somalia.



Maran Centaurus

Somalia is one of the most lawless countries in the world. It has had no effective government for over 16 years. Many well-armed gangs of pirates operate from its coastline. The pirates do this for money. Once they hijack or capture a ship they contact the owners and demand a ransom payment. When this is paid the pirates allow the crew and the ship to sail away unharmed.

The pirates have been attacking ships around the coastline of Somalia, in the Gulf of Aden, and in parts of the Indian Ocean. These are busy shipping routes. Many ships travelling to and from Asia, the

Middle East, Europe and the Americas use them.

Navy ships from the USA, EU member countries, Russia, China, Japan and India have been **patrolling** the seas off Somalia to try to stop pirate attacks. Many larger ships now have armed guards on board. Yet in the past two months 38 ships have been attacked. Ten of these were hijacked.

The pirates work over a very large area of ocean that is hard to patrol. Another problem is that they have become more daring and have improved their weapons. Some work from what are called 'mother' ships. These operate far out to sea. When the mother ship spots a possible target, small, fast boats are launched carrying groups of armed pirates. They surround the ship, get on board, and force the crew to sail towards Somalia. The navy ships cannot attack them once they get on board because the pirates threaten to harm the crew.

The oil tanker captured by the pirates is called the *Maran Centaurus*. It is a Greek-owned ship with a crew of 28. The tanker was sailing towards the southern tip of Africa on its way to the USA. As it was full it was travelling very slowly. The ship was captured around 1,280 kilometres (800 miles) off the coast of Somalia, close to the Seychelles. The tanker is carrying oil estimated to be worth US\$20 million (£12 million).

One year ago Somali pirates captured a Saudi Arabian oil tanker. The oil it was carrying was worth US\$100 million (£60 million). After weeks of negotiations the oil tanker and its crew were released. The ship's owners are reported to have agreed to pay a ransom of US\$3 million (£1.8 million).

Currently pirate gangs are thought to be in control of 15 hijacked ships and over 260 crew members. These ships are all currently being held off the coast of Somalia. ■

ELECTION IN HONDURAS

A presidential election was held in Honduras on 29th November. The winner, with 56% of the votes, was Porfirio Lobo.

Many people in Honduras are hoping Mr Lobo's election will help end the political problems in the country. These have been going on for over five months.

Manual Zelaya was elected president in 2005, when he won more votes than Mr Lobo. Honduras's constitution – the rules by which a country is governed – says a president can be elected for one four-year term only. Many senior judges, high-ranking army officers and elected members of the

NewsCast

GINGERBREAD VANDALS — Local businesses in a city in Norway have offered a reward for information about **vandals** who smashed up their town. Every year people in the city build a town made of hundreds of gingerbread houses. It's a local Christmas tradition. The buildings are thought to be the largest gingerbread town in the world. But now it has been destroyed. City officials want to catch the people who ruined it. People from the city are quickly making more gingerbread houses and rebuilding the town. A local newspaper gives money to a children's charity for every gingerbread house in the town.

Honduran parliament suspected Mr Zelaya planned to change the rules. This, they believed, was because he wanted to be elected for another four year-term. Some of them planned to stop this from happening.



Porfirio Lobo

Five months ago Mr Zelaya was forced to leave Honduras. Soldiers surrounded his house early one morning. They put him on a military plane and flew him to Costa Rica, a nearby country. Removing an elected leader in this way is known as a coup d'état or a 'coup' (pronounced coo). Many of Mr Zelaya's supporters held protests in the streets of Tegucigalpa, the capital city.

The Honduran parliament appointed Roberto Micheletti as temporary president. He said he would be president until the next elections. Then a newly-elected president would take over.

Many countries, including the USA, complained. They insisted the coup was illegal and Mr Zelaya should be permitted to return. Those who were against the coup said Mr Zelaya should be allowed to complete his four-year term, due to end in January. The USA said it would stop making aid payments to Honduras as a protest.

In September Mr Zelaya reappeared in Honduras. He had managed to cross the border secretly and enter the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa. The police surrounded the embassy building. The president

of Costa Rica helped to arrange talks between Mr Zelaya and Mr Micheletti. But they were unable to reach an agreement. On 2nd December Congress, the parliament of Honduras, voted against Mr Zelaya being allowed to complete his term.

The USA has **indicated** it will accept the election result. Yet many other countries in South and Central America, including Brazil, say they will refuse to recognise Mr Lobo as president. They insist if they do it will send a message to other countries that coups will not be punished. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the president of Brazil, also declared that Mr Zelaya would be allowed to stay in its embassy in Tegucigalpa.

Mr Lobo will officially take over from Mr Micheletti as president on 27th January. ■

SEPARATED TWINS RECOVER

On 17th November, **conjoined** twins named Trishna and Krishna were separated during a complicated operation in Australia. Trishna awoke safely soon after the surgery. Her sister Krishna finally woke up from a coma, which had been **induced** by the doctors, on 22nd November.



Moira Kelly with Trishna and Krishna

The twins were born in Bangladesh. They were joined at the head. Their parents thought they would not be able to look after them. Soon after their daughters were born, in 2007, they placed them in an orphanage in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh.

The Children First Foundation is a charity based in Australia. It looks after children who need medical or emotional support. The charity heard about Trishna and Krishna and decided to bring them to Australia. Expert doctors could then work out if the twins could be separated.

Conjoined twins develop when a fertilised egg does not completely divide. So they are always identical and always of the same sex. Several hundred pairs of conjoined twins are born every year around the world. Sometimes, doctors decide conjoined twins can be separated in an operation. If they are older, conjoined twins may make their own decision to have an operation. But it can be dangerous.



In 2003 two women from Iran who were conjoined twins volunteered to have separation surgery. Doctors in Singapore carried out the operation, but both women died during the surgery. The two Iranian women were also joined at the head.

Being a conjoined twin can put physical stress on the body and its organs. For example, if twins share a heart, the heart has to work very hard because it is trying to support two people. Trishna and Krishna were conjoined at the tops of their heads. They shared some blood vessels and several parts of the brain.

One famous pair of conjoined twins was Chang and Eng Bunker (1811 – 1874). They were born in Siam, now called Thailand. The twins were joined together on one

side of their chests. Today it would have been possible to separate them, but at the time it was not. They worked in a circus in America and made a lot of money. They married two sisters, bought two farms and had many children. As the Bunkers were from Siam, they were known as the 'Siamese twins'. This is why many people still call conjoined twins Siamese twins.

The operations to separate Trishna and Krishna took around 30 hours. At first the doctors said they thought there was only a 25% chance of the two girls recovering. The twins, who will be three years old in December, have now been sitting up and making baby noises.

Moria Kelly helped to set up the Children First Foundation. She has been the girls' **guardian** since they were first brought to Australia. She says the hospital has been doing tests to see if either girl suffered any brain damage during the operation. The doctors hope both girls will recover well.

Trishna's and Krishna's mother has been told about their operation. She said she was pleased but did not want her children to come back to Bangladesh. This, she explained, was because she believes the twins will get a better education if they stay in Australia. ■

AMAZON MEETING

A summit, or meeting, about the Amazon rainforest was held in the city of Manaus, in Brazil, on 26th November.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is the president of Brazil. He arranged for the meeting to be held in Manaus, as it is the largest city in the Amazon region.

Most of the Amazon rainforest is in Brazil. Parts of it are also in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, French Guiana, Guyana and Suriname. Representatives from all these countries were invited to the summit. Nicolas Sarkozy, the president of France, chose to attend the meeting on behalf of French Guiana, as it is a French colony.



The Amazon rainforest is the largest rainforest in the world. Most scientists agree the forest is one of the world's best defences against global warming and climate change. This is because its millions of trees absorb large amounts of carbon dioxide from the air. Extra carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, mostly from the burning of fossil fuels – oil, gas and coal – is thought to be one of the main reasons world temperatures have been increasing in recent years.

Over the last 30 years environmentalists have become worried about how many trees in the Amazon rainforest have been cut down. This is known as deforestation.

One main cause of deforestation in the Amazon is farming. Trees have been cleared for cattle farms and for growing soya beans. Another cause is logging. This is when groups of people illegally cut down the trees, transport the wood and sell it in other countries.

Recently the Brazilian government has passed several laws that make it illegal to clear the rainforest.

The number of trees being cut down has now been greatly reduced. However, President Lula insists other countries must understand that 30 million people live in the area covered by the rainforest. He says it will be necessary to arrange for them to have different jobs that do not affect the rainforest. This will cost money.

President Lula argues that, hundreds of years ago, there were large forests in other parts of the world such as Europe and North America. He insists that if other countries want South American countries to preserve the Amazon rainforest, they must help to pay for it. This, he says, is because they were responsible for cutting down their own forests in the past.



Amazon rainforest

Many countries, including France, agree. Already Norway pays money into a fund, run by Brazil, which has been set up to help protect the rainforest. President Lula hopes other countries will follow Norway's example after attending the United Nations (UN) meeting on climate change in Denmark, in December. ■

AWAKE ALL ALONG?

A doctor in Belgium has described for the first time how he studied a man who has been in a coma for 23 years. The doctor surprised many people by discovering that although

the man could not move or speak he had been **conscious** all the time.

When someone is in a coma he or she is unconscious. People in a coma cannot be woken up and do not respond to things such as being in pain or people talking to them. They cannot move, control their muscles, or communicate. This unconscious state is caused by damage to a part of the brain. There are several things that can cause this to happen. One is if a person's head is badly injured, such as in a car accident.

This is what happened to Rom Houben in 1983. After he was in a car crash his body was paralysed. Mr Houben could not move or speak. Doctors believed he was not conscious and therefore in a coma.

The Belgian doctor has just published his report of his work with Mr Houben. In 2006, the doctor gave Mr Houben a brain scan. This type of scan was not available when Mr Houben was first injured more than 20 years ago. The new brain scan, the doctor said, showed Mr Houben's brain was working and he was conscious. Yet he could not communicate or let anyone know, because his whole body was paralysed.

The doctor who worked with Mr Houben is a neurologist. He treats people who have illnesses of the nervous system. The brain uses the nerves to send and receive signals to and from different parts of the body. So neurologists frequently treat people with brain injuries.

After discovering Mr Houben's was not unconscious doctors tried to find ways to communicate with him. One noticed that when they spoke with him he moved one of his toes

very slightly. He seemed to be able to use his toe movements to answer simple 'yes-or-no' questions.



Rom Houben

Later a **therapist** noticed there was also a very slight movement in one of Mr Houben's fingers. The therapist has now spent many hours with Mr Houben helping him to write on a specially-made keyboard. She holds his arm by the elbow and guides his finger over the keyboard. The therapist has to 'sense' a very slight movement in Mr Houben's finger when he chooses a letter.

As the movement in his finger was so small, some people did not believe it was Mr Houben who was writing the words. They thought the therapist was imagining some of his movements.

One doctor set up a test. The therapist left the room. The doctor then showed Mr Houben several objects. When the therapist returned the Doctor asked Mr Houben to type out the names of the objects he had showed him. He got them all correct. This, the doctor said, proved it really was Mr Houben who was communicating.

Doctors say Mr Houben's condition – known as 'locked-in syn-

drome' – is very rare. However they now plan to check other coma patients to see if, like Mr Houben, they really are conscious.

With the help of his therapist Mr Houben has written a short story. In it he describes what it is like to be 'locked in' a human body without being able to communicate for over 20 years. ■

MINARET VOTE IN SWITZERLAND

On 29th November a referendum, or vote in which all adults can take part, was held in Switzerland. Part of the referendum was about the building of minarets in the country. Nearly 58% of the people who voted said no more minarets should be built.

Minarets are tall tower-like structures attached to some mosques. Traditionally minarets are used as a high place to call Muslims to prayer.

NewsCast

OLDEST SHEEP — A world's-oldest record holder has died peacefully on a farm in Australia. Lucky, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, was the oldest sheep in the world. Her owners said Lucky found the recent heat waves in Australia uncomfortable. To keep her cool, Lucky's owners had moved the sheep into a special air-conditioned building. Lucky was awarded her world record in 2007. She had been hand-reared as a lamb after being abandoned by her mother.



Lucky was 23 years old. This is twice the average lifetime of a sheep.

However, in many modern mosques the call to prayer is now made from a prayer hall with the use of a microphone and speakers.

The Swiss People's Party, one of the political parties in the coun-



Minarets

try's parliament, said it wanted a referendum on the building of minarets. In Switzerland the government must hold a referendum if over 100,000 people sign a [petition](#) supporting it. The signatures must be collected within a period of 18 months. These types of votes are known as

'Popular [Initiatives](#)'. The Swiss People's Party helped to collect signatures of people who wanted the referendum.

About 400,000 Muslims live in Switzerland. This number has greatly increased over the last 15 years. Many Muslims moved to Switzerland from the former Yugoslavia after it began to break apart in the 1990s.

Switzerland has around 150 mosques and prayer rooms. Many are in places converted from old factories and similar buildings. Only four mosques in Switzerland have minarets. Recently, many mosques applied for permission to build minarets. Switzerland has rules about noise, so even if they were built the minarets would not be able to be used to call people to prayer.

The Swiss People's Party says building minarets is a sign of what it calls 'Islamisation'. It uses this term

to describe the idea of Islam 'taking over' a country that was not traditionally Islamic. A few people said they believed if the minarets were allowed, sharia law – a strict form of Islamic rules – would become common in Switzerland. They said sharia law could not work alongside Switzerland's democracy.

Leading politicians were embarrassed by the result of the vote. Many business leaders also declared it was the wrong thing to do. The Swiss government said it harms Switzerland's [reputation](#) with other Muslim countries. Some European leaders were also surprised by the vote. Muslim leaders in Switzerland said they worried the vote might lead to attacks on Muslims living in the country.

In other European countries, such as Belgium, Italy and The Netherlands, there are groups opposed to Muslim immigration. Leaders of these groups said their governments should now agree to hold votes similar to the one held in Switzerland. ■

COMMONWEALTH 'HEADS' MEET

On 27th November Queen Elizabeth the Second officially opened the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM). The meetings lasted for three days. They were held in Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Commonwealth is officially called the Commonwealth of Nations. All but two of its 54 member countries were once part of the British Empire – they are former British colonies. Mozambique and Rwanda, in Africa, are the two

Commonwealth countries that have never been British colonies. Mozambique was once a Portuguese colony. It joined in 1994. Rwanda was officially accepted as a new member at the meeting in Trinidad and Tobago. It was first colonised by Germany and then France before becoming an independent country.

Queen Elizabeth the Second is the official head of the Commonwealth. She is a [figurehead](#), so has no real political power over the 54 member countries.

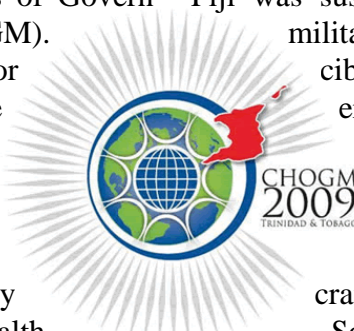
CHOGM is a biannual event. This means it is held once every two years. The leaders of each member country attend. Patrick Manning, the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, hosted the meeting.

The number of members of the Commonwealth varies. To remain a member, a country must have a political system that allows for free speech, democracy, equality of different races, free trade and a desire for world peace.

In the past some countries have been expelled or suspended. For example, the Commonwealth suspended Zimbabwe in 2003 because of the way its government was treating its people. Later Zimbabwe said it no longer wished to be a member. Fiji was suspended in 2006 after military commanders forcibly took over the government of the country.

Commonwealth leaders have said Fiji will not be allowed back in until proper democratic elections are held.

Some people say the Commonwealth is old-fashioned and does not have any real power. Others disagree. They say it can help to solve problems in many different countries.



The total population of all Commonwealth member countries is around two billion. This is about 30% of the world's population. Of these around 800 million are Hindus, 500 million are Muslims and 400 million are Christians.

Commonwealth members are estimated to be responsible for about 20% of the world's economy. This is expected to grow, as India – one of the fastest-growing economies in the world – is a member. A former Indian diplomat, Kamalesh Sharma, is the current Secretary-General, or leader, of the Commonwealth.

At the CHOGM there were talks on climate change and global warming. Three non-Commonwealth guest leaders attended these talks – Nicolas Sarkozy, the president of France, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, the prime minister of Denmark, and Ban Ki-moon, the leader of the United Nations (UN).

In December an important UN meeting on climate change will be held in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. The three guests asked to attend the talks, as they want Commonwealth members to agree to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions at the Copenhagen meeting.

During her stay in Trinidad and Tobago Queen Elizabeth the Second watched a performance sung by local schoolchildren. She also saw an exhibition on carnivals in the Caribbean.

The next CHOGM is expected to take place in Sri Lanka in 2011. ■

The generator is a prototype. It has been built in an old factory that once made paper. The factory is next to a small river where fresh water flows into the sea's saltwater.

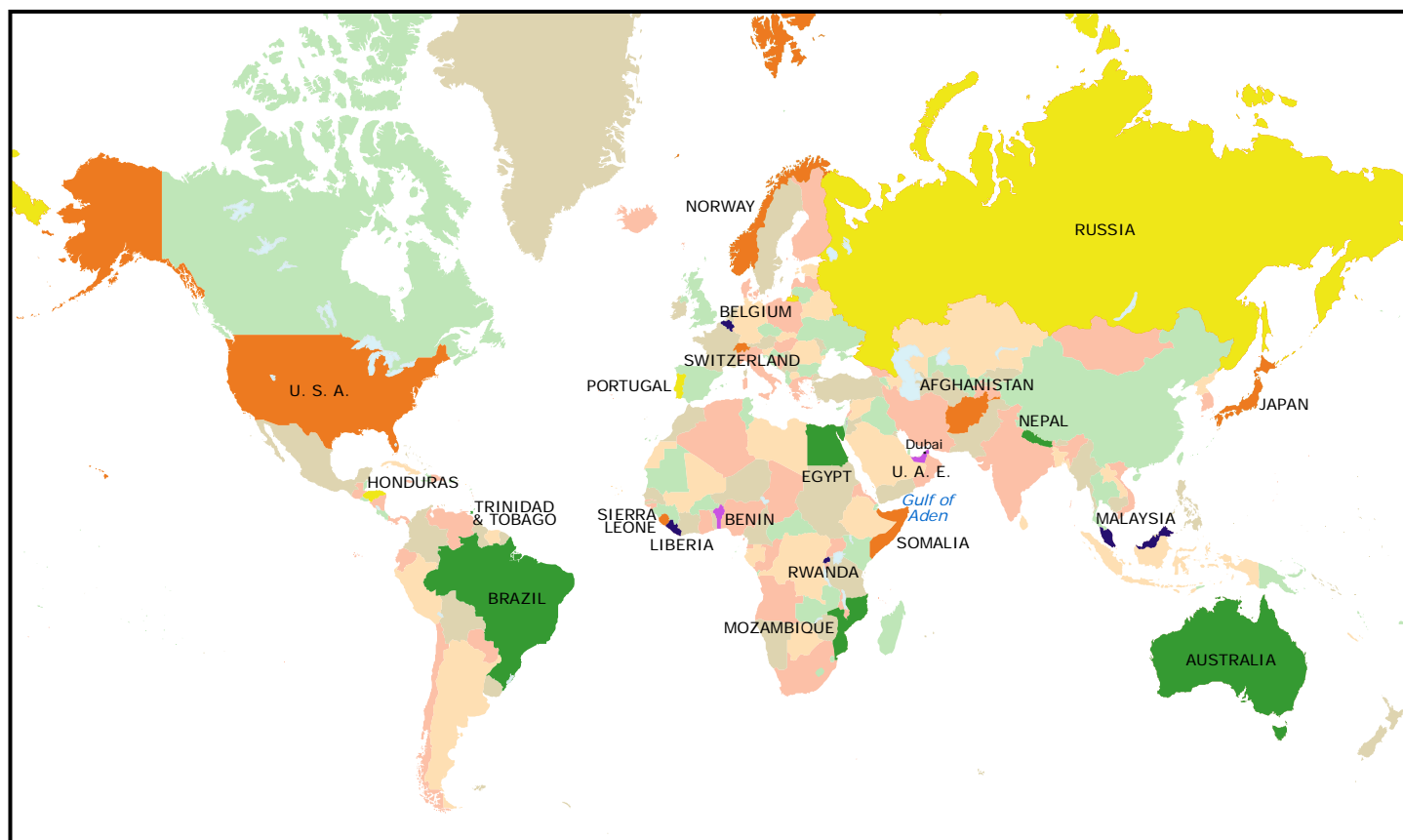


Osmotic power building

SALTWATER POWER

Statkraft is a Norwegian company that produces energy from renewable resources. On 24th November it turned on the world's first saltwater power generator.

The government of Norway owns the Statkraft Company. The old paper factory is about 64 kilometres (40 miles) from Oslo, the capital city. Crown Princess Mette-Marit, a member of Norway's royal family, officially opened the prototype salt power plant.



The generator uses osmosis to produce electricity. Osmosis is the natural way in which water molecules can pass through a membrane. This process happens in nature. For example, osmosis is how leaves are able to absorb moisture.

In the factory fresh water and saltwater are separated by a membrane. This is thin enough so small molecules of fresh water can pass through it, but the sea water molecules, which carry the salt, cannot.

The saltwater naturally ‘pulls’ the fresh water through the membrane. This movement increases the pressure on the saltwater side. When the pressure is high enough, it can be used to turn a turbine. This is what generates the electricity.

The company calls this ‘osmotic power’ and believes it has several advantages. For instance, it makes no noise and produces no greenhouse gasses, such as carbon dioxide. Unlike wind power, ‘salt power’ can make electricity all the time and

does not rely on the weather. It also has little effect on the local environment. However, salt power plants can only be built in places where rivers flow into the sea.

The prototype power generator will now be used for testing and to do research. It will only produce enough electricity to boil a kettle or light a large torch. The Company hopes to build a bigger version in the next few years. This could be used to make electricity for several buildings close to the factory. Later, company officials say, they plan to build larger plants, which could produce enough electricity to supply large areas of the country.

Officials at the company believe one day osmotic power could generate as much as 50% of the electricity used in European countries in the future. ■

One way a player can get a lot of points is to make a word using all seven letter tiles in one turn. The player wins 50 additional points for this. It is called a ‘bingo’.

The World Scrabble Championship was first held in 1991. It has taken place every two years since then. The toy companies Mattel and Hasbro sponsor the competition. The last Championship was held in Mumbai, in India, in 2007.



Scrabble board

On the third day of this year’s competition, one player from Ghana won a game by playing four ‘bingoes’ in a row.

In the final Pakorn Nemitman-suk, from Thailand, and Nigel Richards, who lives in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, played five games of Scrabble. Mr Richards, who is from New Zealand, was the winner of the World Scrabble Championship in 2007.

Mr Pakorn was declared the winner. He won a prize of US\$15,000 (£9,100). ■

NewsCAST

UNUSUAL BRIDE — A man in Japan has taken part in an unusual wedding. His bride was an avatar from a video game. In the game, people choose to ‘go out with’ avatars. They can bring the avatar virtual flowers and take her on virtual dates. The wedding was reportedly held at a church on the Pacific island of Guam. The man then held another reception at a technology university in Tokyo, in Japan. Friends and newspaper and television reporters attended this party. Although marrying an avatar is not a legal marriage in Japan, a religious priest attended the ceremony.

NEW SCRABBLE CHAMPION

From November 26th to 29th, the World Scrabble Championship was held in Johor Bahru, in Malaysia.

Scrabble is a word-building game. An American architect invented the game in 1938. Players have seven square tiles, each of which has a letter printed on it. The players have to try to make words using the letters. The first player puts his or her word on a board marked with a grid. Then the next player in turn has to build a word that is linked to the first player’s – similar to a crossword puzzle. Once a player has put down a word, he or she takes more letter tiles to try to build new words. Each letter is worth a certain number of points. Letters that are commonly used, such as ‘e’, are worth one point. More uncommon letters, such as ‘z’, are worth ten points.

IS DIRT GOOD FOR YOU?

Scientists in the USA have written a report that says children should be allowed to get dirty. The report says being too clean can actually stop our skin from being able to heal itself properly when we get cut or injured.

Bacteria are microscopic organisms. They live in every habitat in the world, including on our skin and inside our bodies. Some bacteria are useful. Others are harmful and are known to cause diseases.

Many medicines have been developed that can kill bacteria or stop them from growing. For example, if you get a cut on your skin, you might clean it with an antiseptic liquid. This destroys bacteria. Keeping a cut clean with antiseptic means harmful bacteria from outside the body can't get into it and cause damage. Many people also now use anti-bacterial soaps and cleaning products.

However, according to the scientists' research, keeping too clean may not be such a good idea. They say some bacteria are important to help our skin to heal if it is damaged or cut.



Is getting muddy good for you?

The immune system is what our bodies use to heal themselves. This system reacts when the skin is damaged or cut. When this happens the area around the injury becomes red and a bit swollen. This is known as inflammation. It is caused by the extra blood cells that flow to the area. Immune cells in the blood can then fight the bacteria and work to heal the skin.

The scientists believe some types of bacteria around wounds help to stop the immune system doing too much. When the immune system reacts too strongly an [allergic](#) reaction

can occur. The immune system, the scientists think, needs something to 'switch it off' and stop it from having too strong a reaction. The scientists claim a cut needs just enough inflammation to heal it, and one type of bacteria helps to 'switch off' the immune system at the right time.

Many doctors also think getting dirty when you are young is important for the body's health. They say dirt exposes our bodies to harmful bacteria in small amounts. This helps immune systems 'learn' how to deal with them. If the body is attacked by bacteria to which it has not been exposed before, the immune system can over-react. This can cause an allergic reaction. Some doctors believe this may explain why more people today seem to have allergies than they did in the past. ■

DEEP SEA SURVEY

The [Census](#) of Marine Life is an international survey that is recording life in the oceans. The ten-year project is due to be completed in 2010. Marine scientists are carrying out the census to provide an inventory, or list, of all forms of life in the sea.

The Census is made up of 14 separate projects. Each will [catalogue](#) different types of marine life. Five of the projects are studying the deepest parts of the world's oceans. Over 340 scientists from 34 different countries are taking part in the census.

On 22nd November scientists working on one of the deep-sea projects showed what they had recently discovered.

At about 200 metres (656 feet) below the surface of the ocean there is no sunlight. The water is completely black. The Census has

recorded more than 17,500 different species living below this depth.



One of the creatures they photographed was a type of finned octopod. It is a rare jelly-like creature. The scientists found nine species of these octopods. They nicknamed one of them 'Dumbo'. These octopods have large fins that look like ears, which help the creature to swim. The nickname comes from a flying elephant with big ears in a Disney film called *Dumbo*. The Dumbo octopod lives around 1,600 metres (one mile) below the surface of the ocean. It is about 1.8 metres (six feet) long.

Scientists working on the Census say fewer species live in the deeper part of the ocean. More are found above 200 metres (656 feet) where

NEWSCAST

CROOKED NECK — Workers at a zoo in the USA, were excited about a new arrival. A five-year-old giraffe named Amali arrived from a wildlife park in another part of the country. Yet when the 3.4 metre (11 foot) tall giraffe moved into the zoo the keepers noticed there was a large kink in her neck. The keepers think the injury must have happened during Amali's journey. They said the giraffe didn't seem to be in pain. They now plan to X-ray her neck to see if the giraffe has broken any bones. The keepers hope Amali's neck will straighten naturally over time.

sunlight can reach. There is less food at greater depths. Marine plants cannot grow without sunlight, so there are no plants for deep-sea creatures to eat. Instead those species living deep in the ocean have adapted to be able to eat things that sink down from above. Some deep-sea creatures, say the scientists, can even survive by eating bacteria.



'Dumbo' octopod

The scientists said they were surprised to discover so many colourful invertebrates at great depths, such as sea stars and sea sponges. Many of these had never been seen before. They will all be recorded and named for the finalised Census of Marine Life. ■

YELLOW FEVER VACCINE

The world's biggest vaccination programme has begun in West Africa. Doctors hope the programme will greatly reduce the number of people who get yellow fever.

Yellow fever is an illness caused when a person is infected by a virus carried by mosquitoes. The yellow fever virus causes headaches and sickness. In some cases the virus can damage the liver. Although many people recover from yellow fever some die from the disease. There is

no known cure. If the virus damages the liver it can cause the skin to turn a yellowish colour, which is why it is called yellow fever.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is coordinating the vaccination programme. The WHO is part of the United Nations (UN). Its job is to advise governments about public health. It plans to give yellow fever vaccinations to around 12 million people living in West Africa.

Vaccines are used to enable the body to fight a disease. A vaccine contains a very small amount of the cells that cause the illness. Sometimes they are cells that have been manufactured in a laboratory to mimic the real virus. In other cases, the vaccine contains dead cells, or only parts of the cells.

The body reacts to the cells in the vaccine by producing chemicals called antibodies. These attack the cells in the vaccine and destroy them. The body's cells can 'remember' the virus. This means they are able to attack the virus if the body becomes infected with it in the future.



Yellow fever vaccination

Yellow fever is common in some West African countries. The WHO estimates around 200,000 people in West Africa are infected with the yellow fever virus every year. About 30,000 of those who get the disease die from it.

The number of people getting yellow fever has been increasing since the 1980s. Officials from the

WHO say it would be impossible to kill or control the mosquitoes that carry the virus so vaccinations are the best way to solve the problem. It has arranged for health workers in 12 African countries to administer the vaccines. These countries are the ones with the most cases of yellow fever. The first three to receive the vaccinations were Benin, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The WHO hopes the vaccination programme will be completed by 2015. ■

GADHIMAI FESTIVAL

On 24th and 25th November, people in Nepal and parts of Northern India celebrated the Gadhimai festival. It is held once every five years. During the festival, people sacrifice animals to the Hindu goddess Gadhimai.

Gadhimai is a goddess of power. People make sacrifices to her because they want the goddess to grant their prayers and wishes. People taking part believe Gadhimai can cure illnesses and bring good fortune if she receives animal sacrifices. They also sacrifice animals to thank the goddess if they feel she has answered their prayers.

The temple where the festival takes place is in a jungle area around 160 kilometres (100 miles) from Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. It has a special slaughterhouse where the animals are killed.

More than 300,000 animals were sacrificed during the festival. Some people bring their own animals with them. Water buffalo, sheep, goats, chickens and pigeons were sacrificed to the goddess. They were killed by 250 butchers who used long knives. Each butcher has to have a special licence to take part in

the sacrifice. People who go to the festival pay money to watch the sacrifices taking place.

Nearby states in India have banned people from sacrificing animals. Because of the ban people living in these Indian states who wanted to watch the sacrifices travelled to Nepal. Organisers say as many as one million people attended the two-day festival.

Many people criticise the sacrifice, which is said to be the largest in the world. People who campaign for animal rights claim the way the killings are done is cruel. Others say it is not necessary to kill animals for a sacrifice. They suggest Hindu tradition says other offerings, such as fruit and flowers, can be made to the gods. Yet the organisers of the festival insist the animal sacrifices are important and will not be halted. The Nepalese government says it cannot stop the festival from going ahead.



People arriving at the Gadhimai festival

After the festival local people eat the meat from the animals that have been sacrificed. The animal skins are bought by local companies and turned into leather. ■

BLUE MOON

Have you ever heard the phrase 'once in a blue moon'? To say something happens 'once in a blue moon' means it doesn't happen very often.

But the phrase 'blue moon' is based on an event in the lunar, or Moon, cycle. In some of the world's time zones, you will be able to see a 'blue moon' in December.

The Moon goes round, or orbits, the Earth. The average distance between the Earth and the Moon is 385,000 kilometres (239,200 miles). The Moon is held in its orbit by the force of gravity.



Full Moon

As the Moon completes its orbit, it looks slightly different to us each night. The amount of the Moon we can see depends on the Sun. The Moon does not emit any light, so what we see is the Sun's light reflecting off the Moon.

The Moon moves through different crescent-shapes. Every so often there is what is known as a full Moon. This is when we can see the whole face of the Moon. It happens when the Sun and the Moon are on opposite sides of the Earth.

It takes about 29.5 days for the Moon to orbit the Earth. So in most calendar years, there are 12 lunar cycles. Our months are between 28 and 31 days long so we usually see one full Moon every month. Yet lunar cycles and calendar months aren't exactly the same length. A calendar year has 11 more days than a lunar 'year'. Over a period of time these extra days add up. This means about once every three years there is one calendar month in which there are two full Moons instead of one.

This 'extra' full Moon is what is known as a 'blue moon'.

The term 'blue moon' once referred to how many full Moons there were in a season – winter, spring, summer and autumn – not in a month. Farmers used to plan their year using the phases of the Moon as a guideline for the different seasons.

Each season, or quarter of a year, would usually have three full Moons. The full Moons were given names that described the time of the year. For example, the harvest Moon occurred at harvest time. When there were four full Moons in a season, the extra full Moon was named the 'blue moon'. People needed to be aware of this so they wouldn't get confused. If they did, their plan for growing crops would be incorrect.

When you see the blue moon will depend on the time zone you live in. Countries in the western hemisphere saw the first of the two full Moons on 2nd December. The second – the 'blue moon' – will be on 31st December. Eastern hemisphere time zones will see full Moons on the 1st and 30th January 2010. ■

Newsademic.com

Editor: Amber Thody

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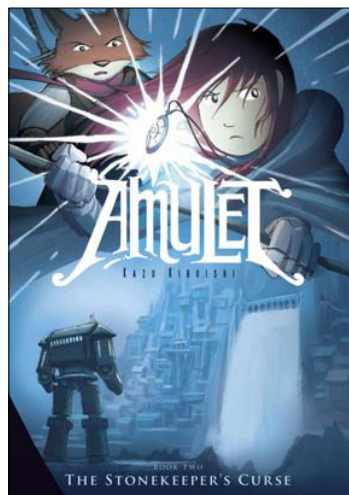
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B O O K R E V I E W

HAVE YOU READ ...?



This is a thrilling, beautiful episode in the Amulet saga. This unusual graphic novel combines the Japanese manga with science-fantasy, resulting in something new.

The story is set in an alternative world that seems both medieval and scientifically-advanced. In control of this world are elves, who are evil creatures. The story begins as the Elf King orders his son, Prince Trellis,

to hunt down two children – but not alone. The Prince is to be accompanied by Luger, a vicious hunter who will kill him if he fails, by the king's orders.

Navin is one of the children, a boy who is learning to pilot a massive, walking house with arms and legs. His teacher is a goofy-looking robot, and there's even an odd pink-and-white rabbit, guardian to Navin and his sister. His sister is Miss Emily, a red-haired girl worried about their sick mother. In the first book, *The Stonekeeper*, their mother was bitten by a poisonous creature. She will die if the siblings don't find the special cure, which they will have to take great risks to obtain. Even the highly-trained men the Elf King sends to get the *gadoba* fruit never return from their quest. How can Miss Emily or her brother hope to succeed in their search for it?

Miss Emily wears a stone pendant. It contains a dangerous force that makes Emily take on strange powers and abilities. The catch? If she lets the stone control her, it will transform her into a monster. Throughout this graphic novel, Emily argues with the stone. It wants her to abandon her family and friends for its power.

Other characters include Leon Redbeard, a reliable fox warrior with some great sword-fighting moves, and Luger, the elf who acts as hunter and executioner for the Elf King. I think the oddest character is the pink-and-white rabbit Miskit, who at first might seem out of place in this brooding fantasy, but proves to be just right for this [epic](#) adventure. It is a very odd but interesting mix.

The artwork is great. I especially love the machines of that world. The landscapes are amazing – I wish they were

poster-sized. There are some great two-page spreads: a walking house fighting a monster, and Miss Emily and friends in a forest of scowling-faced trees surrounded by skulls and bright pink fruits. My favourite pages present another forest filled with green trees, insects, water and mushrooms, which are like images from a dream. Remember hearing how a picture is worth a thousand words? I think it's true here. The backgrounds are incredible.

Though the setting feels nearly ancient, there are trains, phones, and those walking houses, which seem downright robotic. There are also smaller robot characters. In the fortified mountain city of Kanalis, anthropomorphic animal-like folk dress, speak and fight as humans of that world do. It seems they were human once, but now are evolving into animal-like creatures, due to a curse.

This story could easily be enjoyed by readers of ages eight and up. The story and the language are pretty simple to follow. Also, it has a mix of cute-looking cartoon characters and some very scary creatures. When an elf transforms into a demon, the imagery can be pretty frightening, but never graphic or gory. And the ending is a cliffhanger – the story is not finished.

You can visit Kazu Kibuishi's official website, www.boltcity.com/amulet/ (yes, it's in English) that details the making of the book, and has comments from the writer himself. It's fascinating as a reader to look at the world of Amulet in more detail, and the process of creating it – and any aspiring graphic novel artists will also learn a thing or two there.

Amulet Book Two: The Stonekeeper's Curse by Kazu Kibuishi. 2009. Scholastic.

Reviewed by **Craig Purdon**

WANT US TO REVIEW A BOOK THAT YOU HAVE READ AND ENJOYED?

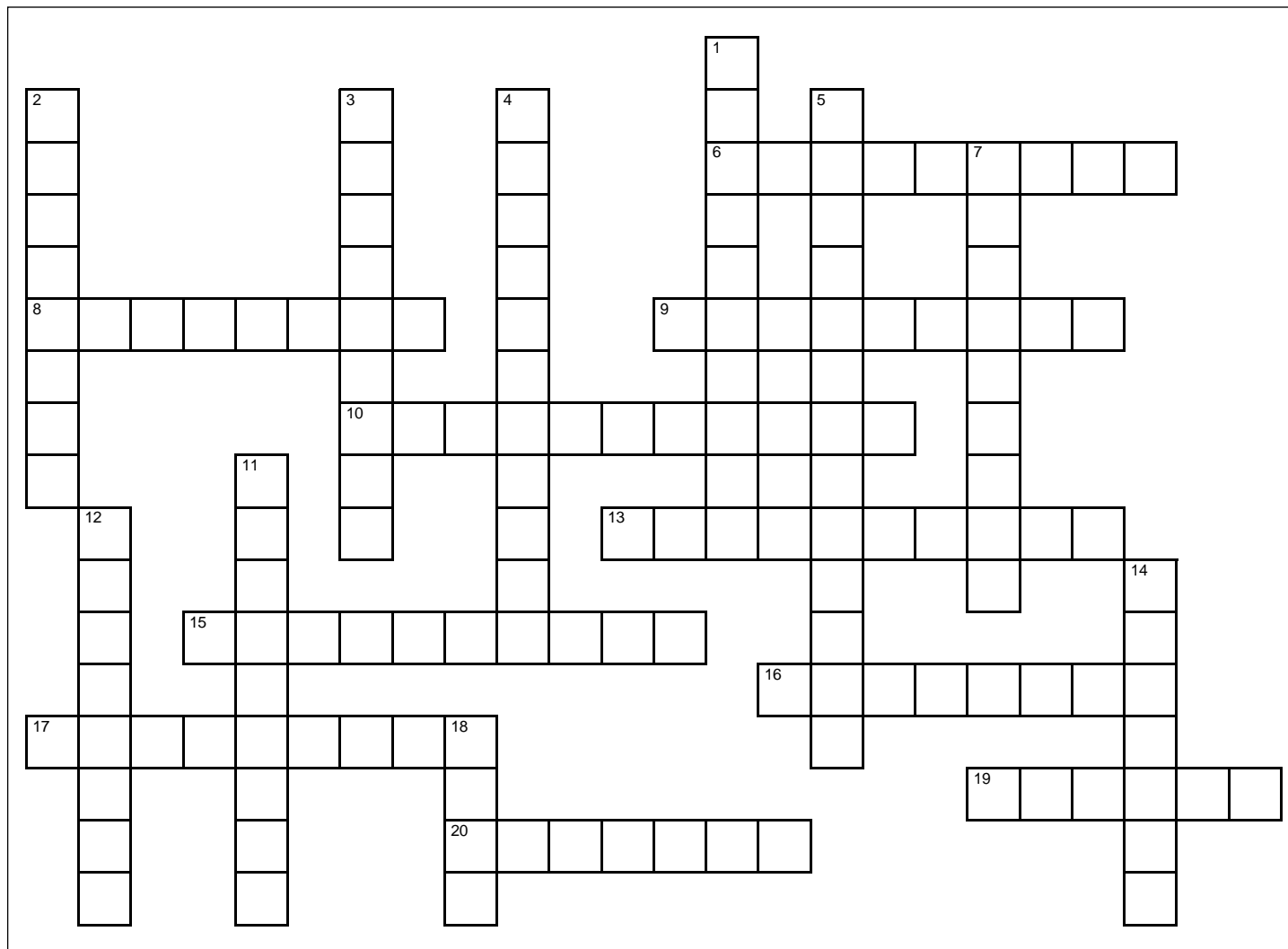
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GLOSSARY

PRIZE COMPETITION

INSTRUCTIONS: ① Complete the crossword. The answers are highlighted in orange in the news stories. There are 25 words highlighted and you need 20 of them to complete the crossword. ② Once you have solved the crossword find the 20 words in the word search on the next page ➡



Across

- 6 Adjective** Describes being aware of what is happening
8 Noun A person employed by a government to speak and negotiate with officials of other countries
9 Noun The act of killing an animal or person as an offering to a god or gods
10 Noun (Plural) New actions or ideas, often intended to solve a problem
13 Noun A leader who has no real power
15 Verb Going around an area to check if there is any trouble or danger
16 Noun A formal written request signed by many people
17 Noun The first example of a machine from which all later versions are developed
19 Noun (Plural) Large vehicles with flat surfaces that are decorated and used in festivals
20 Verb Caused something to happen

Down

- 1 Verb** Increasing or intensifying something
2 Noun A person who legally takes charge of a child whose parents are unable to look after him or her
3 Noun A person who treats mental or physical illnesses, often without the use of drugs or operations
4 Noun A fatty, waxy substance found in the blood and body tissue of all animals
5 Noun (Plural) Animals that do not have backbones
7 Verb Point something out to make it known
11 Verb To make a full and systematic list of things
12 Noun A thin skin or similar covering
14 Noun (Plural) People who pointlessly destroy or damage things especially public buildings
18 Adjective Describes a story that happens over a long period and involves a lot of action and difficulty

GLOSSARY

PRIZE COMPETITION *CONTINUED*

I N I T I A T I V E S R E S C T Y G
 N C L P E S L A D N A V T D S P L N
 V A S R T U A I C S D A L I F F I I
 E Y C O Z O F C H P O N P T P L D T
 R V J T H I Q Q R L R A T X E E I A
 T W E O E C O F F I R L H A T O P L
 E R P T N S T F I E F L U A I A H A
 B D A Y A N W A H G L I C U T X R C
 R P D P R O C T M O U I C R I F V S
 A M X E B C H P R O D R O E O Z U E
 T T F B M A Y E J N L L E Z N R P I
 E B K Z E C T C I P L P N H J W F L
 S X I G M S I J G I D K I E E B E D
 H J G N E P U R N H K E G D J A J L
 Y H R L E M S G U A R D I A N J D V
 R H O U Y D Z T I O K D E C U D N I
 H H A T R N S P P S C F V F P P B U
 C A T A L O G U E W C U F Q H L G S

INSTRUCTIONS: ③ Find the crossword answers in the word search. Words can go vertically, horizontally, diagonally and back to front. ④ After solving the word search write down the unused letters, starting at the top left and reading from left to right, top to bottom to find the solution. **Hint** - The numbers of letters and words in the solution are shown under the word search.

COMPETITION PRIZES

Glossary Prize Winner

Paperback copy of 'Amulet Book Two: The Stonekeeper's Curse' by Kazu Kibuishi

Glossary Prize Runner up

10 free issues of Newsademic

Sudoku Prize Winner

10 free issues of Newsademic

ISSUE NUMBER 106 PRIZE WINNERS

Glossary Competition

Lucy Shen, Canada
Michael Sanchez, USA

Sudoku Competition

Maria Mackey, UK

Competition solution (two words with a total of 16 letters)

Go to www.newsademic.com log in and submit your solution by clicking on the "Enter competition" link within the Subscribers tools menu.

Deadline for receiving your entry is 10 pm on 17th December 2009 (GMT/UTC).

COMPETITION RULES:

1 Competition prizes are awarded on a per issue and not a per edition basis. 2 Only one entry per person per competition will be accepted. 3 You must obtain permission from your parent/guardian before entering if you are under 16 years of age. 4 Deadline for receiving entries is at 10 pm (GMT) on 17th December 2009. 5 The winners will be randomly selected from all correct entries received. 6 The winners will be contacted by E-mail. Newsademic's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 7 Prizes must be taken as offered. There are no cash alternatives. 8 Newsademic does not accept any responsibility for lost or late entries due to the internet. Proof of submission is not proof of receipt. 9 Prizes won by those who have used a school subscription to enter will be awarded to the individual entrant and not to the school. 10 Competitions are not open to employees or contractors of Newsademic. 11 Newsademic reserves the right to cancel competitions at any stage, if in their opinion it is deemed necessary or if circumstances arise beyond their control. 12 These rules are governed by the laws of England and Wales. 13 When entering competitions entrants will be deemed to have accepted these rules and to agree to be bound by them.

SUDOKU COMPETITION

INSTRUCTIONS: ① Fill the boxes on each horizontal row with a number between 1 and 9. ② Fill the boxes on each vertical row with a number between 1 and 9. ③ Make sure that each number between 1 and 9 also appears in each highlighted 3 x 3 square box. ④ After solving the Sudoku puzzle write down the numbers from the tinted vertical column from top to bottom in the boxes below.

Competition Solution

			4					
	1			6		7		
	4			9	3		6	
		3	9	5			7	
1		8						
	6							9
7					4			5
6		4					3	8
			2	3				